

Department of Modern History,
University of Liverpool.

24. II. 57.

Dear Dr. Vicens,

Many thanks for your letter. I am now working on the list of books which you enclosed; some of these works are not available in Liverpool, and others have not yet arrived, but I will send reviews of the remainder to Sr Rubió as soon as possible.

I am very grateful for your kind and generous remarks about my two pieces in the "Bulletin of Hispanic Studies." I was very surprised the other day to see that they published in the other "Indice" (the Madrid literary review) a rather distorted version of the Menéndez Pelayo article, taken from the "Bulletin" without my knowledge and without my permission. The result was very bad!

I wonder if I can ask your advice? I have just finished a work on Spanish colonial administration in the 18th century which I hope will be published within the next year; this is a study, based on archival documentation, of the intendancy system, and is an attempt to take administrative history beyond legal texts and government intentions into the field of practical operation and results. Now, for various reasons, I wish to change my territory and concentrate more particularly on Spanish history, preferably of the Habsburg period. I still have a lot to learn. As you know, the problem of the foreign student who is interested in Spanish history is to know what is being done by Spanish historians and what still needs to be done; otherwise there is much unnecessary duplication of effort and no point of coordination. Two projects interest me. (1) The practical operation of Spanish administration under Philip II and its impact on the mass of the people. Obviously this is a big subject, but there are various aspects on which one could concentrate: either the Councils (as Schäfer did for the Consejo de Indias), or the office of Secretary (as Conyers Read has done for the English secretaries of the same period), or a more specialised topic like the sale of offices (as Mousnier did for France). It seems to me that we need more fundamental works on Spanish administration, so that the problem of the decline of Spanish government can be taken out of the arid wastes of ideology into the more fertile

fields of historical analysis. (2) A subject which is of obvious interest to an English historian, the role of Spain in the Counter-Reformation. I always think that the notion - shared by many Spanish and English historians - that Spain was the secular arm of the Counter-Reformation is a great over-simplification. And the Anglo-Spanish struggle has been very partially treated by English historians. Many aspects of this problem have already been studied, such as Spain and the Council of Trent, the struggle in the Low Countries, the Anglo-Spanish conflict. So it may be that this is a subject for a work of synthesis by someone with more maturity than I possess. On the other hand it might be possible to start on one aspect of the problem - and one which interests me - such as the relations between Philip II and the Papacy. It is true that von Pastor has abundant information on this theme, but apart from the fact that his analysis is very weak, his work suffers from the defect of not having exploited Spanish archives.

Do you think that either of these projects are worth doing, and if so which do you think would be more valuable? On the other hand, if you think that none of these ideas are profitable, or if you know that they are already being studied by Spanish historians, could you suggest some other theme that I could usefully pursue? I will be very grateful for any help and advice you can give me.

I am happy to have met José Fontana and to have been of some help to him. As we live in the same house we have many interesting conversations, and my appreciation of some of the problems of Spanish history has grown considerably under his influence (as it did also under that of Ramón Gubern). I am very impressed by the quality of his mind and by his acute critical perception; he is a credit to his master and to the Barcelona school of history.

I realise that you are very busy and I ought not to trouble you with so many questions. If I can be of any help to you please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

John Lynch